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REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

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STRANDED ROHINGYA VESSEL DRIFTS INTO INDIAN WATERS

The boat left Bangladesh shores days ago and has been adrift for a week after its engine broke down, according to the UNHCR

REFUGEES HAVE RUN OUT OF FOOD AND WATER

UNHCR director for Asia and the Pacific, Indrika Ratwatte, said the refugees on board the vessel ran out of food and water several days ago. "Many are in a highly vulnerable condition and are apparently suffering from extreme dehydration... A number of refugees have already lost their lives, and that fatalities have risen over the past 24 hours," he added

INDIA URGED TO LOCATE AND RESCUE THEM

- The refugees were on their way to Malaysia, when their boat broke down and started drifting towards the Andaman islands
- UNHCR said it has alerted authorities of states surrounding the Andaman Sea to find the vessel and disembark the refugees
- Over a million Rohingyas are in crowded camps in Bangladesh

90
ESTIMATED NO. OF REFUGEES, INCLUDING WOMEN AND CHILDREN, ON THE BOAT

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Nominated MLAs topple Pondy govt

UT headed for Prez rule months ahead of polls; CM accuses Speaker of flouting norms

DEBJANI DUTTA @ Puducherry

Puducherry CM V Narayanasamy tenders his resignation to Lt-Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Monday | EXPRESS

PUDUCHERRY created history on Monday with an elected government being toppled by nominated legislators, who were allowed to participate in the trust vote against the Congress government. With a number of legislators jumping ship, the floor strength of the Congress-DMK combine was reduced to a mere 12 on Monday. The Opposition had 11 votes of elected members against the government, which went up to 14 when the three nominated members were also considered. Interestingly, all the nominated legislators are BJP functionaries.

Shortly after the vote, Chief Minister V Narayanasamy tendered his resignation to Lt-Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan. The Opposition has also decided not to stake claim to form a government, which means the Union Territory is headed for President's Rule. "We will not try and form a government at this stage," said BJP state president V Saminathan. "With the blessings of people, the NDA will form the next government in Puducherry after the elections," he added.

The Congress and its ally DMK termed the trust vote as a murder of democracy. Narayanasamy accused Speaker VP Sivakolunthu of having flouted the guidelines in declaring the confidence motion as defeated. After the Chief Minister moved the motion and addressed the House, the government whip RKR Anantharaman posed a question to the Speaker on whether the three nominated members had the right to vote. The whip pointed out that as nominated members could not vote in Presidential elections, they also could not take part in the trust vote. P7

TN can't use surplus Cauvery water, says BSY

ASHWINI M SRIPAD & K SHIVAKUMAR @ Bengaluru, Mysuru

WITH Tamil Nadu planning to utilise surplus Cauvery water to link rivers, the Karnataka government on Monday said it will strongly oppose the project and will push the much-delayed Mekedatu balancing reservoir project in the state.

As the Cauvery issue heated up, Kannada activists accused the Centre of favouring the Tamil Nadu project with an eye on the upcoming Assembly elections in that state.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa said, "We will not allow Tamil Nadu or any other state to use surplus waters from the Cauvery river."

What triggered the fresh war of words was the foundation stone-laying ceremony by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswamy on Sunday for an intra-state river-linking project by building a canal from Cauvery river to Vaigai and Gundar rivers. The project plans to divert over 6,000 tmcft of surplus Cauvery water.

Deputy Chief Minister Dr C N Ashwath Narayan said Karnataka will take up the Mekedatu project and sought details of works taken up by the Tamil Nadu government, while Water Resources Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi left for Delhi to file objections against the Tamil Nadu project. CONTINUED ON: P4

MAHADAVI CASE: STATE SUFFERS SETBACK IN SC

Karnataka suffered a setback in the Supreme Court on Monday, with regard to the Mahadayi project on sharing the Mandovi river water with Goa and Maharashtra. The SC ordered that a Joint Inspection Committee be formed to investigate whether Karnataka diverted Mandovi water under the project in violation of court orders. P7

RBI asks Centre, states to cut indirect taxes on petrol, diesel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH fuel prices touching historic highs, the Reserve Bank of India has urged both the Centre and state governments to reduce indirect taxes on petrol and diesel. Taxes levied by the Centre and local governments make up for 60% of the retail cost of petrol, while it is 54% in the case of diesel.

"Calibrated unwinding" of taxes is needed to reduce price pressures in the economy, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said in the Monetary Policy Committee meeting that concluded on February 6, its minutes released on Monday showed. "CPI inflation, excluding food and fuel, remained elevated at 5.5% in December, due to inflationary impact of rising crude oil prices and high indirect tax rates on petrol and diesel, and pick-up in inflation of key goods and services, particularly in transport and health categories. Proactive supply side measures, particularly in enabling a calibrated unwinding of high indirect taxes on petrol and diesel are critical to contain further build-up of cost-pressures in the economy," said Das.

In January, Goldman Sachs had estimated Brent crude oil price to reach $65 a barrel by the middle of 2021. As international crude prices increase, petrol-diesel prices will continue to rise if tax rates don't change. Fuel prices directly affect household budgets as prices of essential items invariably go up in tandem with petrol / diesel prices.

ECONOMIC TIES

As border cools, Chinese FDI set to flow in again

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH border tensions with China appearing to be ebbing, the Centre has decided to clear as many as 45 Chinese investment proposals worth over ₹20,000 crore.

Confirming the development, officials in the Finance and Commerce ministries told *TNIE* that these FDI proposals include high-profile ones that have been stuck due to tensions between the two countries. These include the proposal by Chinese auto giant Great Wall Motors to manufacture electric vehicles in India.

Other notable proposals include the one by SAIC Motor Corp and projects in the electronics and power sectors. SAIC, which started selling cars in India in 2019 under its British brand MG Motor, has already invested $400 million in India and wants to bring in more investment bolster its production capacity.

Great Wall plans to invest $1 billion in India over the next few years. P9

Marshalls to be posted at wedding halls: Minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

MARSHALLS will be deployed at marriage halls to ensure Covid guidelines are followed, said Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar, here on Monday after holding a video-conference with all district administrations. Not more than 500 people are allowed in a gathering and face masks are compulsory for all. Catering service providers will also be instructed to get tested before they render service, he added.

Asking people to cooperate with the government, he said adhering to guidelines is necessary to avoid another lockdown. "As people attending large gatherings are not following the guidelines, it has become necessary to deploy marshalls," Dr Sudhakar said. CONTINUED ON: P3

CM'S MEET ON VAX DRIVE

CM Yediyurappa to hold a video conference with officials on the vaccination drive this weekend

6-mth bail for Varavara Rao after 2.5 years

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

THE Bombay High Court on Monday granted six-month bail on medical grounds to 81-year-old poet and activist **Dr P V Varavara Rao**, who is an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon case. He was arrested two-and-a-half years ago.

The court observed it was a "genuine and fit" case for granting relief in view of Rao's advanced age, given the inadequate facilities at Taloja central jail hospital in Navi Mumbai. The bail was set at ₹50,000 personal bond and two solvent sureties. The bench said if it denies relief, it will be abdicating its Constitutional duties as a protector of human rights and right to health covered under Article 21 of the Constitution. Merely because he is an accused in cases pertaining to serious offences, his health cannot be ignored, the bench added. It directed Rao to remain in Mumbai.

DISHA RAVI SENT TO ONE DAY IN POLICE CUSTODY

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Monday sent 21-year-old climate activist Disha Ravi to one-day police custody to be confronted with co-accused in the case. She has been held in connection with the alleged involvement in sharing a "toolkit" on social media related to the farmers' protest. The other accused Nikita Jacob and Shantanu Muluk are currently on transit bail.

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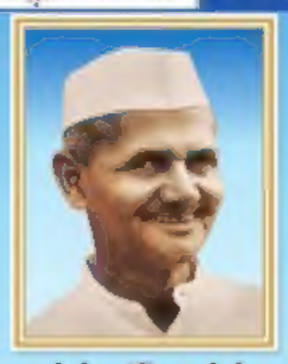

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and invites you for a lecture on
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by
Shri Gurcharan Das
Author and Former CEO, Procter & Gamble, India

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